DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 566 FL 006 106

AUTHOR Gonzalez, Gustavo
TITLE Issues in Bilingual Education: The Acquisition of the First Language.
PUB DATE Nov 73
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the NAEYC Conference (Seattle, Washington, November 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education; *Bilingualism; *Child Language; Dialects; English (Second Language); *Language Development; Language Instruction; Language Research; Native Speakers; Second Language Learning; *Spanish

ABSTRACT

Bilingual education means that equal emphasis is given to the development of the child's first language and to the learning of English as a second language. The teacher should know exactly where his students are in the development of their first language when they begin to study the second language. This requires a knowledge of the language acquisition process. By using language patterns from the student's own linguistic inventory to present content material in the classroom, the teacher increases the chances of successful communication. Using the child's dialect of the first language is also important if his classroom experiences are to be nontraumatic. When enough information on the acquisition of the first language is gathered, guidelines can be established as to what language structures are developmentally characteristic for children of different age levels, thereby enabling teachers to help students who may be losing fluency in their mother tongue. Knowledge about first language acquisition helps the teacher of English avoid those structures that the student cannot yet grasp in his first language. More research is needed on the varieties of the first language spoken in given geographic areas. A detailed summary of the author's research on the acquisition of Spanish by Mexican-American children in South Texas is included. (PM)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 094566

ISSUES IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION: THE ACQUISITION OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE

My presentation this afternoon consists of two parts:

1) The case for more research in acquisition of the first language.

2) Results of Spanish language acquisition research carried out in Texas with Mexican American children in 1970.

Bilingual Education as used here means the use of both languages as media of instruction. It means equal emphasis given to the extension of the child's first language as well as the teaching of English as a second language. It means that both languages will be considered equally important and of equal value.

Much attention has been given to the teaching of English in a bilingual program; for this reason, I will not delve into it here. What is all too often ignored is teaching through use of the child's first language, fostering development of expression in the first language, and developing curriculum and teacher training materials based on what we know about how the first language is learned. These last two themes are mentioned only in passing, as they will be explored by the other presentors.

In a very real sense, what is being proposed here is nothing new; the approach advocated is basically that of proceeding from the known to the unknown--from what the child has been developing in his home previous to his school entry, to whatever goals we as teachers set up for him in our Bilingual Education Programs. In keeping with the conference theme of "Where are all the children now?", and to assure full development in the first language, we need to know where the children are relative to development in their first language (be it Spanish, Chinese, Navajo, Tagalog, or any other) when they first enter our classroom.

FL 006 106

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS ~~COPYRIGHTED~~ MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gustavo Gonzalez
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

What benefits can we hope to reap by studying the language acquisition process? Why is it so important? Why is it an issue?

The primary reason for such study is to determine the child's level of sophistication relative to use of basic structures in the language. In order to make maximum use of the child's previous home experience, knowledge, and language in instructing him, we need to discover, to study what language structures he can manipulate successfully; what structures he is capable of understanding and producing effectively. By using structures from the child's own linguistic inventory in presenting content material in the classroom, by utilizing those sentence structures and grammatical forms that we have found to be part of his linguistic repertoire, we can enhance our chances of successful communication and teaching.

In using the term 'language structure,' it should be made clear that we are not referring to vocabulary. Reference is to productive language patterns in the child's speech. All too often in the past, we have tended to measure a child's vocabulary and taken the result to be an accurate measure of the child's linguistic ability. We have largely ignored the child's ability to use functional structures in the language. Having a large vocabulary does not necessarily assure linguistic proficiency in the language. What is being advocated here is not that lexical items be eliminated from the course of instruction, but rather that their importance be placed in perspective, relative to the other elements that comprise language.

In addition to the above mentioned advantage in maximizing instruction, such research will enable teachers to use language structures that will make the child

feel comfortable, secure, non-threatened. Using the child's variety (or dialect) of the first language is likewise important. This combination of familiar linguistic structures and familiar variant can help make the child's classroom experiences non-traumatic, they can enhance the child's self-concept and attitudes, and make the child an eager participant in class.

By being aware of the child's linguistic sophistication at a given age level, we can develop and utilize curricula within the child's grasp.

When enough information on the acquisition of the first language is gathered, it may then be possible to establish guidelines as to what language structures are developmentally characteristic for children of different age levels. This would enable us, in addition to increasing teaching effectiveness, to help those interested children who may be losing their fluency in their mother tongue to recapture it once more.

Along with language acquisition studies, we need to do research on the varieties of the first language spoken in given geographic areas. Only in this way can we separate what is dialectal from what is developmental in nature. To take an example from Spanish: there are two ways of expressing the future. To say "He will buy" in Spanish, it would be possible to say Comprara or Va a comprar. Knowing which form is used in the geographic region under study would offer guidance in determining whether the child was lagging developmentally or merely reflecting the speech of the area. In South Texas, for example, Va a comprar would be THE expected form. A teacher who receives her guidance from books written in Spain or Mexico in determining what is acceptable or unacceptable in the child's speech is using an erroneous point of reference.

Knowledge about first language acquisition can offer assistance in the teaching of English. Knowing what concepts the child can express in the first language can serve as guidelines in deciding the sequence of introduction of language structures or concepts. The teacher can present English structures parallel to those the child can use in his first language, avoiding concepts in English that the child can't yet grasp in his first language.

If bilingual programs are to encourage (as they must) the maintenance and development of the child's first language, if they are to formulate a long-range plan for nurturing this development, if the native language is to be on a par with English in future bilingual programs (as it should have been all along), then the acquisition of the first language must be carefully and thoroughly studied, be it Japanese, Chinese, Tagalog, Puerto Rican Spanish, Chicano Spanish, or any other first language.

The second part of the presentation is a summary of research I did in 1969-70 on the acquisition of Spanish by Mexican American children in South Texas. The results presented are intended to provide a sample of the type of information needed. More research from other parts of the country is needed before we can determine if our proposed sequence of structure acquisition is accurate and, if not, what variations exist.

ISSUES IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION:

THE ACQUISITION OF THE 1st LANGUAGE

Presented By
Gustavo Gonzdlez, Ph.D.
Center for Applied Linguistics
Arlington, Virginia
(703) 528-4312
at the
NAEYC Conference
Seattle, Washington
November 8, 1973

AGE 2.0

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Syntax: Structures with ser: Predicate Nominative: San pollos. Structures with estar: Location: Está allá. Negative no primarily in isolation (as a rejection of a proposition). Imperative consisting of verb only: Ten. Full-sentence interrogative: ¿Qué es esto?

Modifiers: exclusively adverbial, mostly locative. Only temporal used is 'horita (ahorita).

Tenses: Mostly present; very rarely a preterit tense.

AGE 2.6

Syntax: Structures with ser and estar, same as in previous age level. 1st appearance of pattern: estar + adjective: Está muy pesado. Syntactic patterns with intransitive verbs, with and without reflexives.

SUBJECT - VERB - DIRECT OBJECT
Ese tiene muchas letras.

DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUN - VERB - SUBJECT
La agarró esta muchachita.

(SUBJECT) - INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUN - VERB - DIRECT OBJECT
Me está pintando los zapatos.

(SUBJECT) - IND. OBJ. PRONOUN - DIRECT OBJ. PRONOUN - VERB
No me lo compró.

Initial appearance of the Indirect Object pronoun. Increase in use of Direct Object pronouns. Increased variation in syntactic placement of Direct Object from previous level.

Increase in verb tenses; tenses noted include present indicative, preterit indicative, present progressive, future (through ir a + infinitive), imperfect indicative, past perfect, and present subjunctive. Only the first four tenses were common to all informants. Children can express the major time categories of present, past, and future by now.

Full-sentence negation was frequent. Initial appearance of negative commands: No saples. Yes-No questions in full form evident for the first time. Question words increase from the previous level of qué and dónde to now include para qué, cuándo, quién, por qué, and cómo. The use of cuándo indicates the emergence in questions of the time concept.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Use of possessive structure: de + NP: De Juan.

Imperatives increase in complexity: Verb + Ind. Obj. Pron. Dame el libro.
Verb + reflexive Pron. Siéntate, Mami.

Sentence complexity increased through use of: Verb + Infinitive
Yo quiero buscar mi perro.

Noun clause as direct object: Yo te dije que estaba llorando yo aquí.

AGE 2.9

Syntax: Locative Adverb - Estar - Subject: Ahí ta (está) el señor.

Subject - Verb - Direct Object

Verb - Subject - Direct Object

Verb - Direct Object - Subject

(Subject) - Direct Object Pronoun - Verb

No new tenses appeared, except for the variation of the present progressive in which andar replaces estar as a helper: Se anda bañando. This was used in addition to and not as a substitute for the estar progressives.

Negation: Full-sentence negation continues; nada and tampoco used for the first time.

Interrogatives: Question words qué, dónde, quién, and por qué continue to be popular. Appearing for the first time are con quién, de quién, and cuál. The mechanism for formulating questions seems to be well established.

NOTE: No attempts were made to elicit questions specifically during the interviews. The questions that resulted were due exclusively to the children's curiosity.

Post-noun possessives appeared at this level in the guise of mío, tuya.

Imperatives: In addition to those found at 2.6, we also noted the pattern Verb + Indirect Object Pronoun + Direct Object Pronoun: Dámela, Pónmela, as well as Verb + Reflexive Pronoun + Direct Object Pronoun: Tómatela tú.

Compound sentences were in evidence for the first time; y was used as the conjoiner. Complex sentences were also produced, through the use of a clause as a direct object: No sé dónde están.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Impersonal reflexives, similar to English One does not do that, for example, were noted here: No se coma, Sí se puede sacar.

AGE 3.0

Structures found at this level included those found at the preceding age level, plus the following:

(SUBJECT) - INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUN - VERB - DIRECT OBJECT
Olga me compró uno.

DIRECT OBJECT - INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUN - VERB - SUBJECT
Esta (ésta) me va a comprar mi papá.

Tenses: Present progressive, periphrastic future (ir a + infinitive), and imperfect indicative seem established; as does the present subjunctive. The construction ir + -ndo (Allá va nadando éste) appeared for the first time.

Locative adverb clauses emerged for the first time: Allá, en (donde) ta (está) la chara. Also appearing for the first time is the reflexive for unplanned occurrences, otherwise known as the exculpative: Se me cayó ahí, mira. Conditional clauses with si were present for the first time: Si no se quita la camisa, le voy a pegar. Comparison of quantities with más: Yo no me como más Pos Tocles.

AGE 3.3

There was an insignificant increase in the number of syntactic structures compared to the previous level.

Tenses: One new tense was noted at this level: the periphrastic future progressive: Yo lo voy a estar viendo. The present subjunctive was used in a variety of situations including the following:

querer: Quiero que se vaya Yanirá.

para que: Pa (para) que no me tumbe.

cuando: Cuando sea grande.

Tag questions appeared here for the first time: Estos niños se portan así, ¿verdá? Also making its initial appearance was the indirect command: Que me la dé. Temporal clauses appeared for the first time: Cuando lo amarran, se desamarra.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The use of noun clauses (Esto es el que lo chupa) and relative adjective clauses (El tiene una hermanita que se llama Lori) has increased noticeably by this level.

The structure tener que + infinitive made its initial appearance at this age group: Tiene que poner éste pa atrás. Also appearing for the first time is the structure Es que + sentence: Es que quiero Mami.

AGE 3.6

Again there was an insignificant increase in the number of syntactic structures.

The perfect tenses (present, past) do not appear to be established in the children's language. This is in opposition to the progressive tenses, which do appear to be established.

The usted form of the imperative is noted for the first time; it appears to be in free variation with the tú form. The children that used it did not appear to discriminate in their usage of the two forms.

Compound sentences with y continue to occur, as do complex sentences created with the use of noun clauses and relative adjective clauses:

Examples: Noun Clause: Yo creo que los puso aquí.

Relative Clause: ¿Qué es esto que está viendo?

AGE 4.0

The following sentence patterns have been established by this level:

(SUBJECT) - SER - NOUN PHRASE
Esto es un pajarito.

(SUBJECT) - ESTAR - ADJECTIVE
Mi amá (mamá) no estaba acostada.

(SUBJECT) - ESTAR - LOCATIVE ADVERB
Está en la tienda.

LOCATIVE ADVERB - ESTAR - SUBJECT
Allá está la pelota.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(SUBJECT) - INTRANSITIVE VERB - ADVERB
Vive onde está su casa.
...yo dormí dosriento.

INTRANSITIVE VERB - SUBJECT
Ta (está) cayendo nieve.

(SUBJECT) - REFLEX. PRON. - INTRANS. VERB - (ADVERB)
El gato se durmió con la mamá.

(SUBJECT) - REFLEX. PRON. - TRANS. VERB - (ADVERB)
Mi muñeca se sube allí.

(ADVERB) - REFLEX. PRON. - TRANS. VERB - SUBJECT
Ya se quemó el mercado.

(SUBJECT) - VERB - DIRECT OBJECT - (ADVERB)
Están componiendo la casa.

(SUBJECT) - REFLEXIVE PRON. - VERB - DIRECT OBJECT
...pa que se mata la pistola.

(SUBJECT) - DIRECT OBJ. PRON. - VERB - (ADVERB)
Yo no lo quiero al revés.

(SUBJECT) - REFLEX. PRON. - DIR. OBJ. PRON. - VERB - (ADV.)
...ma lo voy a llevar pa la casa.

(SUBJECT) - INDIRECT OBJ. PRON. - VERB - DIRECT OBJECT
El muchachito le está dando dulce.

One occurrence of inflected future (pintará) was present; however, the periphrastic future (ir a + infinitive) was used overwhelmingly by our sample. It is my strong suspicion that this is a feature of the dialect under investigation and not a developmental feature of the children's Spanish.

Ningún was the sole new negative form.

The informants continued to use tú and usted forms indiscriminately in imperatives, even when the commands were directed at the same person. Pero joined y as a conjunction in forming compound sentences.

Comparison with más and como (Era chiquito como yo) were in evidence.

AGE 4.6

At this age, there was a greater variety of patterns incorporating ser and estar. Among these was the initial appearance of the temporal

adverb as a complement of ser (Es de noche).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

One informant used the past perfect subjunctive (Le hubieras dicho a la muchacha que te diera el nombre) and the conditional (¿Cuál sería?). The former tense is new; the latter had occurred previously at age 3.0, in one child's speech.

The following tenses were part of the speech of all informants for this level:

Present indicative
Preterit
Imperfect indicative
Present progressive: estar and andar
ir + -ndo
Periphrastic future (ir a + infinitive)
Present perfect indicative
Present subjunctive
Past subjunctive

Indiscriminate use of tú/usted forms in imperatives continues.

Compound-complex sentences emerge: Yo no quiero botas porque ya cuando esté grande, ya no me van a quedar.

AGE 5.0

No significant difference in variety of syntactic patterns.

Temporal adverbial clauses now introduced by antes que and hasta que (compared to previous levels where only cuando was used). Locative adverbial clauses continue to be introduced by donde only.

Relative and noun clauses are very frequent.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE 12

SUMMARY OF VERB TENSES: 2.0 - 6.0

AGE LEVELS	Present Indicative	Preterit Indicative	Imperfect Indicative	Conditional	Present Progressive	Past Progressive	Future Progressive	Andar Progressive	Ir + -ndo	Present Perfect	Past Perfect	Present Subjunctive	Past Subjunctive	Periphrastic Future	Inflected Future	Past Perfect Subjunctive
6.0	E	E	E	NE	E	E	?	?	?	E	NE	E	NE	E	NE	NE
5.0	E	E	E	--	E	E	--	E	NE	NE	--	E	NE	E	--	--
4.6	E	E	E	NE	E	E	--	E	E	--	NE	E	E	E	NE	NE
4.0	E	E	E	--	E	E	--	E	NE	NE	NE	E	NE	E	NE	--
3.6	E	E	E	--	E	NE	--	NE	NE	--	--	NE	NE	E	--	--
3.3	E	E	E	--	E	NE	NE	--	NE	--	--	E	NE	E	--	--
3.0	E	E	NE	NE	E	NE	--	NE	NE	NE	--	E	NE	E	--	--
2.9	E	E	NE	--	E	NE	--	NE	--	--	NE	NE	--	E	--	--
2.6	E	E	NE	--	E	NE	--	--	--	--	NE	NE	--	E	--	--
2.0	E	NE	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

LEGEND: E = established at this age level
NE = not established at this age level
-- = not occurring at this level
? = no data available